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ABSTRACT

Experiments have been conducted in Canada to determine whether the suggestopedic method is adaptable to the North American situation. Courses developed for teaching French and English closely followed the Bulgarian model. An approach was developed which sought to meet the needs of students of varying degrees of language proficiency. A symposium was held in 1974 to ensure that courses would be developed in close cooperation with Dr. G. Lozanov, who participated in the symposium. So far a total of four levels have been developed, using the suggestopedic method for teaching French and English. Results indicate that, from the viewpoint of functional bilingualism, suggestopedia has brought about a renewal of language teaching, both in terms of increased proficiency and reduced learning time. The suggestopedic method is directed toward the whole person. It is simple and universal, but its novelty can lead to rejection by some persons and an attempt at modification. However, for best results, suggestopedia must be expanded only in its authentic form. (AM)

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PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF SUGGESTOPAEDIA IN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN CANADA

Gabriel Racle

Canadian experience with suggestopaedia began in Sofia in the fall of 1972. It was at this time that, following the cordial conclusion of an agreement, a team from the Public Service Commission of Canada went to the Institute of Scientific Research in Suggestology. Two French teachers and I had the opportunity, as part of our activities at the Institute, to give a first complete French course to Bulgarian students. It was after this first experiment, which was quite success ful according to Dr Lozanov and his colleagues, that we began another experiment, this time on Canadian soil.

The goal of this experiment was simple. We wished to ascertain whether suggestopaedia was adaptable to the North American situation, with employees of the federal government as the students. We gave a detailed description of the organisation of this scheme and its undoubted success, both from the point of view of student satisfaction and the results obtained, in the work which we edited, A Teaching Experience with the Suggestopaedic Method.[1] We felt, on the basis of practical experience, since a scientific comparison was not possible, that our Canadian students had behaved like our Bulgarian students, and that they had learned as much. The major question on our mind - can suggestopaedia be transferred from Sofia to Ottawa - had been answered.

We then decided to extend the scope of our work. We organized a second French course and two English courses, and in 1974 we used this teaching material with about 200 students. These students, who were mainly studying French, took an initial course for five weeks, three hours each day, and returned for a second course six weeks later. It was at this time that we attempted a comparative experiment with another method. Since the results were once again promising, it was decided to continue. This too is described in detail in the work which I mentioned above.[2]

At this point I should like to make a few comments on this first portion of our work, and these will deal primarily with some points of methodology. Then I shall make a few theoretical comments.

From the outset we decided to follow the Bulgarian model closely - the model we had observed at length in Sofia, had experienced at first hand in a Russian language course we had taken and had used later ourselves to teach French to the Bulgarian students. By so doing we wished to avoid increasing the variables and finding we did not know where we were going. Our transferring the suggestopaedic approach to the Canadian situation already seemed to us sufficient. On the other hand, it was necessary to adapt the content of the first course to our student population - for example, eliminating the Bulgarian references (geographic, cultural, historic, political) and replacing them with appropriate local elements. However, this adaptation also had to preserve the suggestopaedic character of the content. Certainly, we developed the whole of our second course, but with strict respect for the framework, the progression, in short, all the details, of the original Bulgarian model.

We also proceeded step by step, so as to develop an approach which would enable us to meet the diverse needs (in terms of the level of knowledge) of our population. Hence the adaptation and testing of a first course; this provided feedback for its improvement and for developing subsequent courses. As may be seen, our experiments were always devoted to complete units (one course, two courses in French or English) which would later produce practical results, namely, a certain level of second language proficiency. The funding of course development was thus always directly linked to practical reality. This procedure offers the advantage of creating sound bases for carrying out an overall program, even if it leads some to see it as a "continuous experimental stage".[3] However, we readily accept this criticism since all suggestopaedia, wherever it exists, is in the same situation. "Suggestopaedia," as Dr Lozanov had said, "is still in its infancy."

Finally, we wished to work still in close co-operation with Dr Lozanov. Particularly for that reason we organized the first International Symposium devoted to suggestopaedia (the first outside the iron curtain) in September 1974, in which Dr Lozanov himself participated. The proceedings of this symposium are also contained in our book.[4]

To attain the standards of bilingualism required by the students, we were led to consider creating material to supplement our program. Thus we added a third course, which we mainly used last year with about a hundred students for continuous training. This means that these students took three courses consecutively, with an interval of only one week between the courses. At the present time we are working at developing a fourth course which we shall use very soon with groups of students who are presently undergoing training. We feel that from

200 to 300 hours of course work represent a relatively inconsequential amount of time for acquiring a second language, compared to the amount of learning time necessary when classical methods (structuro-global audio-lingual, Direct Method and others) are used.

As far as we can tell, only the Institut Maurice Thorez has used a third course. Thus we are conducting a unique experiment if this information is correct.

Is there a contradiction between the development of a suggestopaedic program for learning a language at several levels (first, second, third, fourth) and the excellent quality of the results which suggestopaedia enables us to obtain? We do not think so, and I shall clarify this point in a moment. I am well aware that someone felt he was in a position to write that our results were "indifferent", but this statement is so gratuitous and was issued in such a polemical context that it proves in itself that our results in any case do not leave some people indifferent.

Agreement must first be reached on what the acquisition of a second language entails. In our context, a second language is acquired when the learner is able to use it in a normal communication situation; this ability is the result not only of memorizing very important units (in terms of vocabulary, morphology, phonemics), but also of automatically acquiring the rules of grammar and usage. It is the mastery of all these elements which makes functional bilingualism possible, and not the sporadic acquisition of part of these elements or of one of the elements without the others. Awareness of this is necessary for an overall assessment. Rapid memorization of lists of words, for example, is certainly quite spectacular, and Dr Lozanov used this method to demonstrate the effectiveness of suggestopaedia at the beginning. However, this in no way represents the functional acquisition of a second language.

The results we obtained have shown that, from the viewpoint of functional bilingualism, suggestopaedia has brought about an absolutely spectacular renewal of language teaching. A comparative experiment was done in 1974 between groups using suggestopaedia and groups using an audio-visual method;[5] use of a communication test had demonstrated a highly significant difference in favour of the suggestopaedic groups, both in oral expression (quality and quantity) and in aural comprehension.[6]

Last year we had about a hundred students who had been trained by the suggestopaedic method take the official bilingualism test. Their results, compared with the results of students who acquired their language knowledge by means of ordinary methods, show a very clear reduction in learning time in the classroom:

Example: Mean learning time[7]

Aptitude / Standard to be achieved	A (good students)	B (less good)	C (average)	D (poor)
02	n = 10 285 hours compared to 596 hours	n = 13 345 hours 790 hours	n = 12 360 hours 973 hours	
03		n = 16 225 hours 702 hours	n = 12 270 hours 852 hours	n = 5 330 hours 887 hours

What this test does not show is the student's real capacity to use his new language in a normal communication situation. Traditional tests suffer one major drawback: they are tests of grammar, linguistic tests, and they do not take communication into account with all the elements (paralinguistic or peripheral) which that involves. Moreover, that is why in our book we made use of work done by our colleagues in the evaluation field,[8] the focus of which was on the search for an effective overall measure - ie, one which is as close as possible to a communication situation. It would certainly be a very interesting spinoff of suggestopaedia if it contributed to the renewal of interest or to the development of a new type of measurement or new ways of measuring in the language field. A suggestotest development program would perhaps be welcome. In any case, through our use of suggestopaedia in the language sector, we achieved some worthwhile results: acceleration of the learning process, learning under conditions which motivate and stimulate the student, satisfaction of students on all levels, the functional acquisition of a new language, and so on. Moreover, the same conclusion was reached by the people in charge of the Ecole Française d'été at McGill University in Montreal. In 1975 we trained a teacher who successfully gave a six-week summer course. In 1976 a teacher from our branch gave this course, and this will be the case again this year. The marked progress of the students, their enthusiasm and their satisfaction were the same.

This now leads me to the few theoretical comments which I promised earlier. For Dr Lozanov, as he explains in Chapter 5 of his work Sugestologia, suggestopaedia can be, and even is, an experimental application of the laws and principles of suggestology. By means of this experimentation, it should be possible to increase or to gain a better understanding of certain aspects of the mechanism of suggestion, to confirm or to invalidate the principles or mechanisms involved.

Thus it is not only important to make a distinction between suggestology and suggestopaedia, which are too often confused in many publications,[9] but also to keep the same level of suggestivity, if one wishes to generalize the results obtained. That is why, in particular, we retained a model which is very close to the Bulgarian model and always strove to develop within the same sphere of suggestivity.

Similarly, we feel that suggestopaedia is a "new science" (the expression is Dr Lozanov's)[10] of education, a new educational concept. "The aim of suggestopaedia is extremely clear and simple: it is to develop a learning system, or ultimately a communication system, based on the principles of suggestology and the results of numerous experiments, which will bring about a desuggestion/suggestion dialectic. The purpose of this dialectic process is to free the individual of previously received negative suggestions that are restricting his development, to stimulate his reserves, to develop his creativity and personality and to make it easier for him to assimilate new ideas."[11]

Thus it may be seen that suggestopaedia is not simply a teaching method, that is, a set of procedures or tools making it possible to teach something, but rather a philosophy or a dynamic of education.[12] A generalization of this kind seems quite realistic to us at this point, although it is necessary not to restrict oneself to the field of techniques. On February 15, 1974, during the first Canadian seminar on suggestopaedia, I concluded a talk with the following remarks: "Suggestopaedia thus represents a genuine philosophy of teaching. It is not a recipe book or a collection of gimmicks, nor is it something you sell commercially or put on cassettes."[13] Three years later my conviction of this point is stronger than ever.

The suggestopaedic process is actually directed to the whole person, whose total potential must be developed by activating reserves which are usually not exploited. This humanist view is fundamental because, in our opinion, it alone enables us to understand all the dimensions of Dr Lozanov's work. Certainly suggestopaedia uses means, because it is not a pure view of the mind, on the contrary. However, the means used form a whole, a totality, which corresponds to the totality of the person. "The suggestoapedic system", Dr Lozanov said in Ottawa in September 1974, "is based on certain humanistic points of view . . . (it is) a global system . . . it is a global approach to the personality."[14] In an article which will appear soon in a Belgian journal, I speak of Gestalt pedagogy,[15] and that, to my mind, is precisely the heart of the matter. Bearing in mind the conscious/unconscious duality of the learner, suggestopaedia uses all possible suggestive channels and strives to co-ordinate all the effects of these to the same purpose. Thus we have a "Gestalt pedagogy", the effects of which go beyond the framework of mere learning. There exists in fact a variety of techniques, such as memorization, relaxation, management and group dynamics. If everything goes well, the technique achieves its goal (and in many cases it achieves it not because of the technique, but because of the suggestion included in the technique, and Dr Lozanov has demonstrated this point brilliantly).[16] Does it do anything else? Suggestopaedic teaching, the keystone of which is the double-level system, is directed in its Gestalt approach at the development of the personality. A suggestopaedic language course has other results beside the acquistion of new knowledge. Dr Lozanov is moreover very explicit on this point: it is only possible to speak of suggestopaedia if the learning process is accompanied by other effects. In a way this is a criterion of evaluation. To quote G. Lozanov, "I would like to say something about the main results of suggestopaedia. If some course ends without

some of these results, it is not a real suggestopaedia course. First of all: the pedagogical results: high results in discovering the resources of the mind, and activating them; secondly, medical, psychotherapeutical, all the neurotical diseases, all the psychosomatic diseases have to be cured during the course of instruction without paying particular attention to them. The teacher is not a physician, but that is a by-product when the course of instruction is well organized. Third, social-psychological effects: eliminating the problem of alienation, bettering social contacts and moral and ethical implications and some psychoprophylactic effects, as well as psychohygienic moments."[17] Thus, precisely because it is structured in terms of the total personality of the learner, by an accelerated,, reinforced, pleasant, natural stimulating type of learning. This is completely in accordance with the words of Dr Lozanov himself: "The principles and means of suggestopaedia are inextricably bound. They must be activated simultaneously at each moment of the learning process."[18] The three dimensions of the learning system mentioned by Dr Lozanov[19] - the psychological, didactic and artistic - are three components of a Gestalt system which integrates the most effective, the most significant and the best known suggestive factors; we shall not refer to it again. In short, this is our conception of suggestopaedia and the direction in which we steer our theoretical and practical work.

In the particular field of language learning, which is not the only field in which we are interested, we found a practical illustration that points to the correctness of our view. "The classical concept of language teaching, " wrote D.A. Wilkins, (it is this concept which is predominant in both child and adult education) "is static in that it takes too little account of language as a characteristic of social life . . . "[20] In other words, traditional methods usually teach a code, but do not

teach the student how to make use of it: "It is possible to have a good knowledge of grammar and to have an extensive vocabulary (this is still Wilkins writing), but not to know how to begin or end a telephone conversation, how to introduce oneself to a stranger, how to express pleasure, how to complain politely (or even impolitely), and so on . . . "[21] I believe that this point may be summarized by saying that languages are taught in a perspective which is too narrow, limited, not global, not social. Suggestopaedic language teaching, however, has a completely different perspective. Z.M. Tsvetkova, in an article which appeared in the Russian journal Inostrannie Yazouke v Shkole in 1971, strongly emphasized this point: " . . . one characteristic of the method used by the Bulgarian Professor Lozanov, is that it does not restrict language teaching to the narrow framework of the analysis of linguistic form and semantic content, but assigns each participant in a class the role of communicator and teaches him to communicate by means of language, that is, to perform linguistic acts . . . "[22] We ourselves developed this question to some extent in our article on the linguistic approach in the suggestopaedic teaching of languages which appeared in the work we mentioned above.[23] It is interesting and important to emphasize that this global learning of a language is obtained through the global approach of the process. To quote Dr Lozanov again: "I think that it is not possible now to have a separate system - pedagogical or linguistic - without taking into consideration some psychological, psychothereapeutical, social-psychological factors, and some psycho-linguistics and some other things, you see, that's why this system is a global system. It is directed especially to foreign language teaching, but it is a global system and in this respect, of course, it has some relationship with some linguistic theories, but it is a global approach towards the personality. This globality is because of the global activation of the personality."[24]

What suggestopaedic language teaching does is to re-create, as far as possible, the first-level and the second-level dimensions which accompany the normal use of language; in other words, both what is obvious - dialogue situations with two or three people, exchanges, the themes broached, gestures and so on - and what is not apparent but is emotional in nature, affective, in short, everything that is normally part of an actual communication situation. As G. Lozanov emphasizes moreover: "suggestion may reveal the potential of the human being not only in the area of memory, but also in many other directions",[25] and this is expressed in learning which is not strictly linguistic. If "learning a language is learning to communicate", to borrow the title of Wilkin' article, it is also true that, when we speak of suggestopaedic learning, "learning to communicate is learning a language". As we have explained elsewhere,[26] suggestopaedia answers Wilkins' query: "Would it not be possible in the concept of a global system of language teaching, to treat the student's intention to communicate as the starting point instead of the goal, as is generally done?"[27]

I feel that I have emphasized strongly enough the global character of the suggestopaedic approach and of language learning by means of this method. This may help explain the approach we took in implementing suggestopaedia. As I emphasized earlier, our aim was always to work with complete units only. Deliberately, we did no restricted or limited research or experiments which concentrated on a single area. I know that such experiments have been carried out elsewhere. R.W. Bushman, for example, submitted a thesis entitled "Effects of a full and modified suggestopaedic treatment in foreign language learning".[28] Bushman carried out his experiment after a very brief visit to our centre in Ottawa. The modifications made by Bushman to the suggestopaedic system in use in Ottawa were, apparently,[29] omission of music and armchairs. The whole

experiment comprised ten hours of learning. I do not believe that such research will take us very far. Dr Lozanov himself issued a warning on this subject, when he stated that the isolated use of single element does not produce significant results.[30]

We are much more interested in research which would enable us to see whether certain types of students are more successful with suggestopaedia or whether the results are practically the same for everybody. We hope to be able in a few months, to announce the conclusions of these studies, together with an evaluation of our course development project.

I should like to emphasize two other points briefly: the simplicity and the universality of the suggestopaedic system. Dr Lozanov's objective was to develop a system that would be as simple and as universal as possible, a system based on recognized suggestive factors which would be activated by very simple means. It is clear, and G. Lozanov has demonstrated this, that results can be obtained not because of the subject's state of sleep, but because of the suggestion included in the process.[31] The same is true of other methods, such as hypnotism and muscle relaxation.[32] These methods are, however, not practical; they are complex and can create problems; hence, on the basis of many experiments, the creation of a suggestopaedic system that is simple, relaxing, easy to use and free of any danger, any counter-indication, or any potentially negative element. We checked the validity of this system by retaining it at its initial level of seriousness and by using it successfully. Hence our determination to pursue this same course.

I should like to make one last point since time and space are limited. We have confirmed that suggestopaedic teaching forms a teaching system which is

quite different from the usual systems and consequently, conflicts with them. This is quite simple to understand: the bases of the suggestopaedic approach are different, the values transmitted are different and the emphasis is on the learner, not on the material to be learned, reliance is placed on the resources of the personality and on their development and not in the first place on the standardized acquisition of knowledge. Programs must be organized, devised, and put into effect on the basis of suggestopaedic principles. All of this, and I have given only a few examples, is new and runs counter to acquired habits and to routine. A feeling of insecurity which brings anti-suggestive barriers into play, especially an emotional barrier, can even be created. Hence it is easy to undersand the tendency to reject or to adopt and transform suggestopaedia. The novelty is accepted, but only on condition that it be channelled into customary moulds.

The result of this would be very deleterious to suggestopaedia, and these attempts at assimilation can rob it of its most original content. Dr Lozanov himself emphasized[33] this danger or source of problems, of which I believe we must be fully aware. It seems clear to me that complete expansion of the suggestopaedic teaching system to all areas would require profound changes, or would give rise to disputes. It is therefore necessary, in my opinion, for all available energies to be devoted to the judicious promotion of suggestopaedia in a safe progression, step by step,[34] which would have solid foundations. It is only at this price that beneficial attainments are possible. And, it seems to me, through the co-ordination of research and studies and the experiences of everyone who feels concerned by the principles of Dr Lozanov, suggestopaedia will be able to expand.

I shall conclude this paper by mentioning the comments of a group of students. After a week of French, they met the officer in charge of bilingualism programs in their department, and he asked them what they thought of their course. They replied: we like it because

- we are treated like adults
- it is intellectually stimulating.

No further comment is necessary.

NOTES

1. Ottawa, 1975, pp. 333-326.

2. See especially: "Second experiment: Janu .ry - June, 1974", pp. 115-205, and G. Racle, "Experimentation with suggestopaedia", pp. 225ff.

3. As, for example, S. Ostrander and L. Schroeder, The ESP Papers, 1976, p. 69. Unfortunately, the authors never came to see what was happening on the spot and never spoke to the Director of the program. That is a great pity.

4. Pp 209ff.

5. Ostrander and Schroeder, op cit, p. 69. The authors are quoting W. Wenger. Their quotations must, however, be treated with caution... The report of P. O'Connell, also quoted by the authors, was badly mutilated to make it say what it did not contain: what P. O'Connell himself calls a "scissors-and-paste hatchet job".

6. A teaching experience..., p. 146.

7. Extract from "Information sur le rendement des étudiants participant au programme de suggestopédie (français) novembre 1975 - septembre 1976", by Catherine Gélinas (with the assistance of Lise Bonenfant), SDB, PSC, 1976 (unpublished report).

8. In particular, the research of L. Duquette (see pages 64-113 and 132-195).

9. Again recently in the publication Training, "Suggestology: Will it really revolutionize training?", January 1977, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 18-22.

10. G. Lozanov, Sugestologia, Sofia, 1971, p. 8 "e nova nauka".

11. G. Racle, "A New development in education", Training 77, p. .

12. We shall soon publish an article entitled "Suggestology: A new dynamic of education", British Journal of Educational Technology.

13. A Teaching Experience..., p. 221.

14. Ibid, p. 297.

15. G. Racle, "Apprentissage langagier et facteurs suggestopédiques", Revue Phonétique Appliquée.

16. See, for example, G. Lozanov, "A general theory of suggestion in the communiations process and the activation of the total reserves of the learner's personality", Suggestopaedia-Canada, 1977-1.

17. A Teaching Experience.... p. 285.

18. G. Lozanov, "The nature and history of the suggestopaedic system of teaching foreign languages and its experimental prospects", Suggestology and Suggestopaedia, 1975, 1, p. 9.

19. G. Lozanov, "The Suggestological theory of communication and instruction", Suggestology and Suggestopaedia, 1975, 3, p. 13.

20. P.A. Wilkins, "Apprendre une langue, c'est apprendre à communiquer", Education et Culture, 1975, No. 28, p. 15.

21. Ibid, p. 16.

22. 2, 1971, "Tour d'horizon et compte-rendu".

23. Op cit, p. 263ff.

24. Ibid, p. 297.

25. G. Lozanov, Sugestologia, p. 18.

26. See article cited in note 15.

27. Article cited on p. 18.

28. A thesis presented to the Department of Linguistics, BrighamYoung University, April 1976, 36 pages.

29. We say "apparently" because there were many other differences between the recognized suggestopaedic system and Bushman's experiment: the teachers were not trained, texts did not conform to the suggestopaedic model, the period was too short to be conclusive, and so on...

30. See G. Lozanov, Sugestologia, p. .

31. A Teaching Experience..., p. 289. For further details the reader is referred to A. Tantchev, Gipnopedia i Sugestopedia, Problemi na Sugestologia, Sofia, 1973, p. 322-330.

32. See note 15 and also G. Lozanov, Sugestologia, p. 268ff and p. 245ff.

33. A Teaching Experience..., p. 293.

34. "You only have to understand, that it is a creative way for development in your pedagogical work and at the same time a step by step development." G. Lozanov, A Teaching Experience..., p. 294.